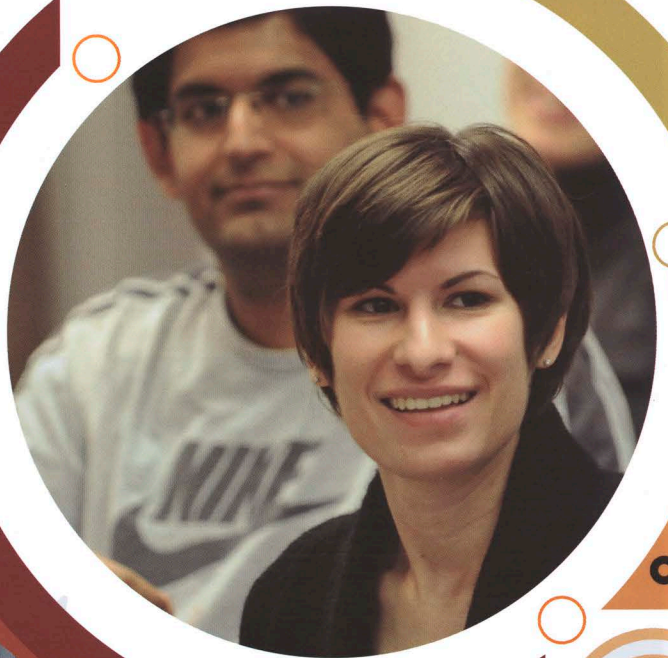


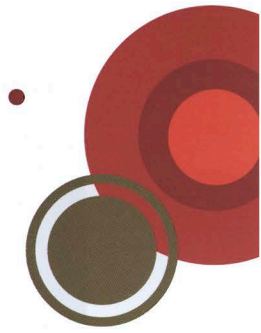
SEIZING the initiative



By David Marc



STUDENTS,
FACULTY, and
CENTRAL NEW
YORKERS are
all profiting
from
a program
emphasizing
entrepreneurial
education



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A HANDS-ON, COMMUNITY-ORIENTED approach to learning is applied to the can-do energies of the entrepreneurial spirit? The Syracuse Campus-Community Entrepreneurship Initiative (or Enitiative) is answering that question daily in more than 120 projects that are transforming the lives of Central New Yorkers, while enriching education and research at SU and partner institutions in the region. Launched with a \$3 million, five-year grant from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation in 2006, the program is bringing entrepreneurial thinking into unfamiliar academic territory and pioneering new paths of study through its projects in the arts, technology, and neighborhood life. Designed with Scholarship in Action in mind, Enitiative is crossing physical and social boundaries as well, bringing students and faculty into work places, home businesses, and community nonprofit organizations, where classroom learning is put to the test of practical problem-solving. "The Kauffman grant gave us the means to take entrepreneurial education in new directions," says associate provost and professor of information studies Bruce Kingma, who has headed Enitiative since its inception. "We ensured broad reach for the benefits of the funding by forming a regional consortium of academic partners. No comparable program in the country has done that. And we put a community engagement emphasis at the center of the teaching mission. This, too, is unprecedented, although it's a logical outgrowth of our Scholarship in Action approach."

Stacey Keefe '99, G'06, executive director of the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, believes many students are getting beyond outmoded notions of entrepreneurship and discovering attractions in what they see. "They're finding that it's not just about the traditional definition of business," she

says, "but rather about new options and personal freedoms." Enitiative community projects have added 30 new courses to the SU catalog and infused 109 existing courses with new entrepreneurial components. These curriculum enhancements have doubled the number of SU students receiving some measure of entrepreneurial instruction. The increased exposure has spurred new interest in the Whitman School's Entrepreneurship and Emerging Enterprises (EEE) program, leading some students with unlikely majors to pursue EEE minors. "Participating students begin to realize that whatever their passion may be—art, chemistry, law, you name it—they can assume greater control over their careers and their lives by acquiring entrepreneurial skills," Kingma says. Justin Cohen '09, who was part of a team of students in a public relations class that developed a communications campaign for a local poster business, had never worked directly with a client before. "This was my first opportunity to get client input and respond to client feedback," says Cohen, an advertising major in the Newhouse School. "It gave the work we produced more substance and more of a professional feel."

Faculty members are benefiting as well. In addition to providing them with exciting new teaching platforms, Enitiative community engagement experiences tend to reinvigorate scholarship efforts. "Face-to-face dialogue with real people confronting real problems helps faculty avoid reinventing the wheel in their research, and many are finding a new urgency in their work," says Kingma, who is negotiating a book contract for an anthology of monographs inspired by Enitiative participation. "But the pluses go beyond good pedagogy and strong research. Faculty and students are our major resources, and we are investing them in the people of this community. Just take a look at some of our programs."



SU'S Educational Partners in Enitiative

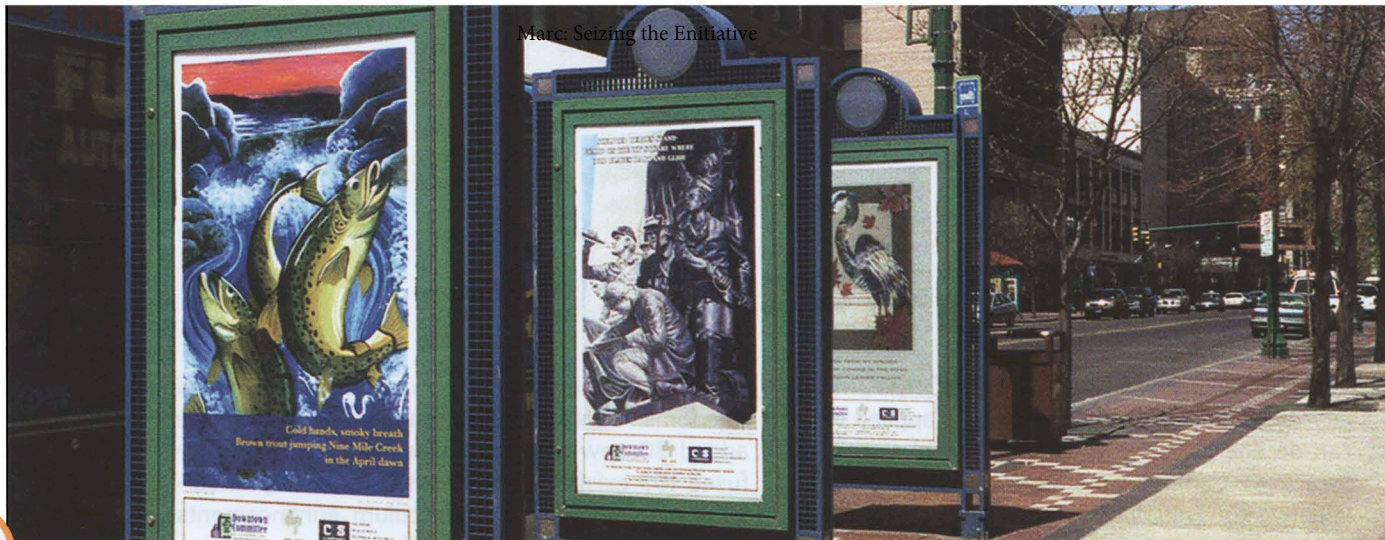
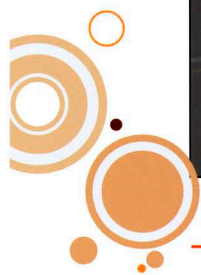
Cayuga Community College

Le Moyne College

Morrisville State College

Onondaga Community College

SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry



Marc: Seizing the Initiative

The Syracuse Poster Project, a collaboration of area poets and SU illustration students, produces art for downtown Syracuse street kiosks.

Think Globally, Promote Locally

IF THE KEYS TO BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS WERE once said to be "location, location, location," an updating might find all three supplanted by "promotion." Public relations professors Dennis Kinsey and Robert Kucharavy of the Newhouse School are using an Enitiative grant to put their students in the service of local enterprises and organizations. "We have the facilities and know-how to perform professional quality focus groups, customer surveys, and other techniques for businesses that otherwise might have no opportunity to take advantage of them," Kucharavy says. "At the same time, we're developing a great learning environment. We don't have to say to our students, 'Well, now, if you were in business, you would do a focus group for a client....' We have them do a real focus group for a real client."

Launched last fall, the Public Relations Creative Center went to work for three clients in its first year of operation: Syracuse Soap Works, which sells 'Cuse Soap and a line of natural personal care products; Syracuse Poster Project, a collaboration of regional poets and SU illustration students producing art for downtown Syr-

acuse street kiosks and for web sale; and the University's Office of Technology Transfer (OTT), which facilitates commercial applications for research discoveries made by SU faculty, staff, and students. "Tech transfer is a crucial service at universities today, but OTT had a problem that was right up our alley," Kucharavy says. "No one seemed to know it existed." Naomi Ratner '10 was among the students who remedied the situation. "I helped design and execute a complete campaign, developing press materials, pitching stories to on-campus publications, and using the SU web site and Facebook to raise awareness," she says. "I had to keep deadlines and establish media contacts—and, of course, make the client happy! It helped me understand the profession."

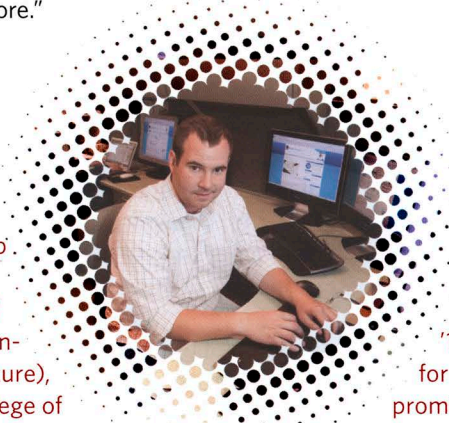
Jim Emmons, coordinator of the Syracuse Poster Project, received marketing data that helped efforts to expand retail sales. "At first, we assumed that we could best reach young shoppers through our online store," Emmons says. "But students said that their peers would more likely buy a poster print at a physical store."

RETAINING TALENT

AS PART OF ITS COMMITMENT TO Central New York's economic well-being, Enitiative is working to stem "brain drain"—the exodus of talented young people who leave the region, degree in hand, for want of career opportunities. The Engagement Fellows Program, established this year by Enitiative and partner organizations, makes an offer that top-of-the-class graduates with fast-track aspirations find hard to refuse: a \$10,000 cash award. "If you want to stay in Central New York, we will work with you to find suitable employment in your area of interest or get you started in your own business," says Bruce Kingma, associate provost for entrepreneurship and innovation. This spring, following a

competitive application process, the University announced its first group of Engagement Fellows, members of the Class of 2009: Garland deGraffenried (School of Architecture), Samantha Harmon (College of Visual and Performing Arts), Carissa Matthews (Newhouse School), Robert "R.J." Sherman (iSchool, Whitman School) and Elizabeth Slate (College of Arts and Sciences).

Sherman, who launched his first business at age 16 and started several others while completing three majors at SU, epitomizes the fellowship's *esprit de corps*. His company, Brand-Yourself.com



LLC, a partnership with Pete Kistler '10, Trace Cohen '10, and Evan Watson '10, is a service for job-seekers that promises "to turn net nobodies into polished web presences." A new Sherman spin-off, *Bootstrap.com*, will offer marketing and promotional services to businesses from its offices in the Syracuse Technology Garden, downtown on Harrison Street. "This fellowship gives me a great opportunity to stay in Syracuse," says Sherman, who hails from Boston, a prime destination for many SU graduates.



Up Close and Personal Computing

INFORMATION STUDIES professor Susan Dischiave is working with students to build bridges over the widening economic chasm that information professionals call “the digital gap.” Bolstering Original Opportunities and Self Through Technology (BOOST) is a

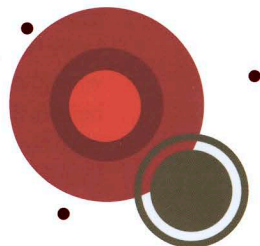
response to the economic and social consequences of computer illiteracy. It was founded in 2008 with an Enitiative grant awarded to Women in Information Technology, a campus group, and the Women’s Opportunity Center, a community organization that helps people overcome obstacles to employment. The program offers basic instruction in technology skills and software use to community residents, and helps identify opportunities for Internet-based home businesses that make use of their talents and interests. “Our students go into the community and teach these skills to displaced homemakers and others who have had little or no contact with what have become basic tools of economic survival in our society,” Dischiave says. “In the process of teaching, the students connect with people and learn the value of giving something back to the community.”

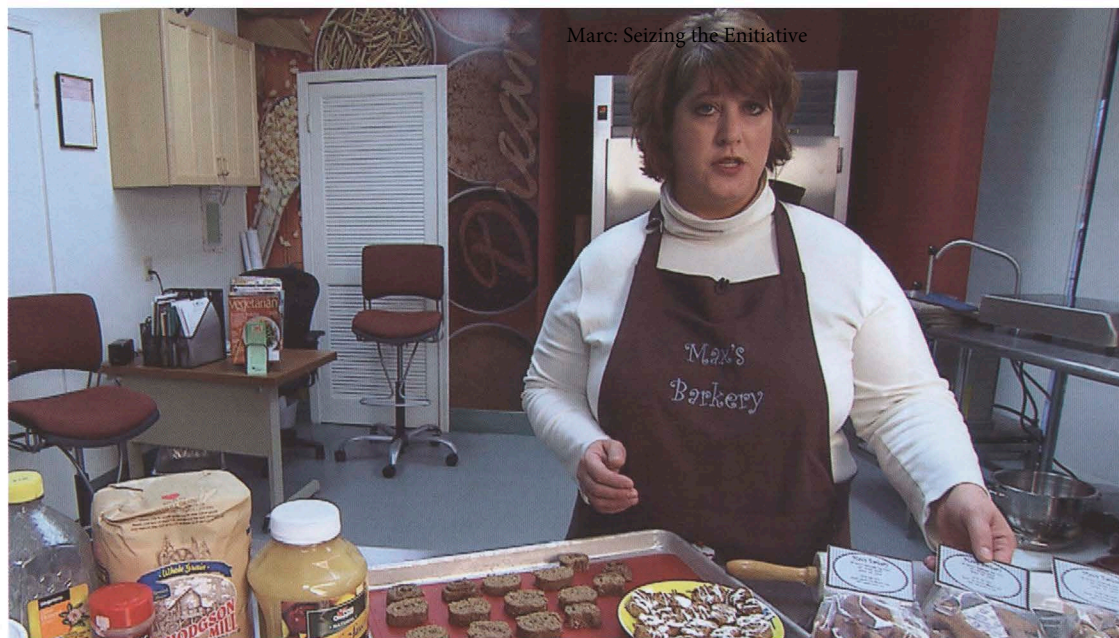
BOOST began last fall with just four volunteers, but the ranks swelled to 35 during the academic year. Many, like Patricia A. Vargas-Leon G’09, were gradu-

ate students. While studying for a master’s degree in library and information science, she collaborated in every phase of the BOOST outreach: writing the grant, designing the curriculum, and teaching the lessons. Having since returned to Peru, she believes the Syracuse program could serve as an international model. “I would like to implement a similar program in Peru and the Andean zone of South America as a first step toward reducing the digital gap in that area,” she says. “Learning to access useful, quality information sources would improve the lives of the people.”

According to Dischiave, BOOST could more fully serve Central New York community needs by expanding its activities in several directions. “We’re looking for ways to help individuals get personal computers and Internet connections,” she says. “There are 12 libraries in the area that have asked us about providing training in their communities, but to do this we would need a mobile lab, because these libraries don’t have basic computing facilities.” Other inquiries about computer training have come from the Chadwick Residence, a refuge for women at risk for domestic violence, and SU’s South Side Innovation Center, a neighborhood business incubator. Most BOOST clients hope to gain better jobs by mastering computer skills, but the economic benefits are sometimes more immediate. “Even a Greyhound bus ticket costs less if you buy it on a computer,” says one BOOST client who frequently visits her mother in Rochester. “Before I learned how, I was paying more than I had to, and I didn’t even know it.”

Enitiative’s partners in the Engagement Fellows Program are the Syracuse Center of Excellence in Environmental and Energy Systems, a federation of businesses and institutions collaborating on sustainable improvements to built and urban environments; and Imagining America, an SU-based national organization that promotes the arts and humanities in public life.





Barbara Janice displays some of the all-natural, homemade dog treats she creates for her business, Max's Barkery.

New Options for People with Disabilities

AGAINST ALL ODDS DURING A TIME OF RECESSION and economic turmoil, dozens of enterprises—an automobile detailing shop, a real estate referral agency, a catering service, to name a few—have been launched in Central New York by first-time entrepreneurs. Most were unable to realize these personal dreams until they made contact with Start-Up New York, an initiative aimed at helping people with disabilities start their own businesses. Administered by Onondaga County and directed by SU's Burton Blatt Institute (BBI), Start-Up (Self-Employment Technical Assistance, Resources, and Training) New York is one of just three such projects in the nation funded by the U.S. Labor Department's Office of Disability Employment Policy. BBI's partners include the Whitman School's Entrepreneurship and Emerging Enterprise program as well as community organizations that work for full participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of civic life. "Self-employment is a viable option for people with disabilities," says Gary Shaheen, BBI's managing director of program development. "People with disabilities, given suitable support and assistance, are fully capable of owning and operating their businesses. Many are talented, creative, self-reliant people, but have never thought of themselves as entrepreneurs. Even those who have considered the possibility aren't likely to know where to locate resources. That's where we come in."

Bolstered by an Enitiative grant in 2007, Shaheen began collaborating with Whitman School professor Larry Bennett to create a working model to promote what they call "inclusive entrepreneurship," and they believe it can be applied across the country. The principal features of the model are these: ensuring access to such basic skills as creating a business plan and reading a spreadsheet; educating career counselors on the value of promoting business opportunities to people with disabilities; researching and cataloging

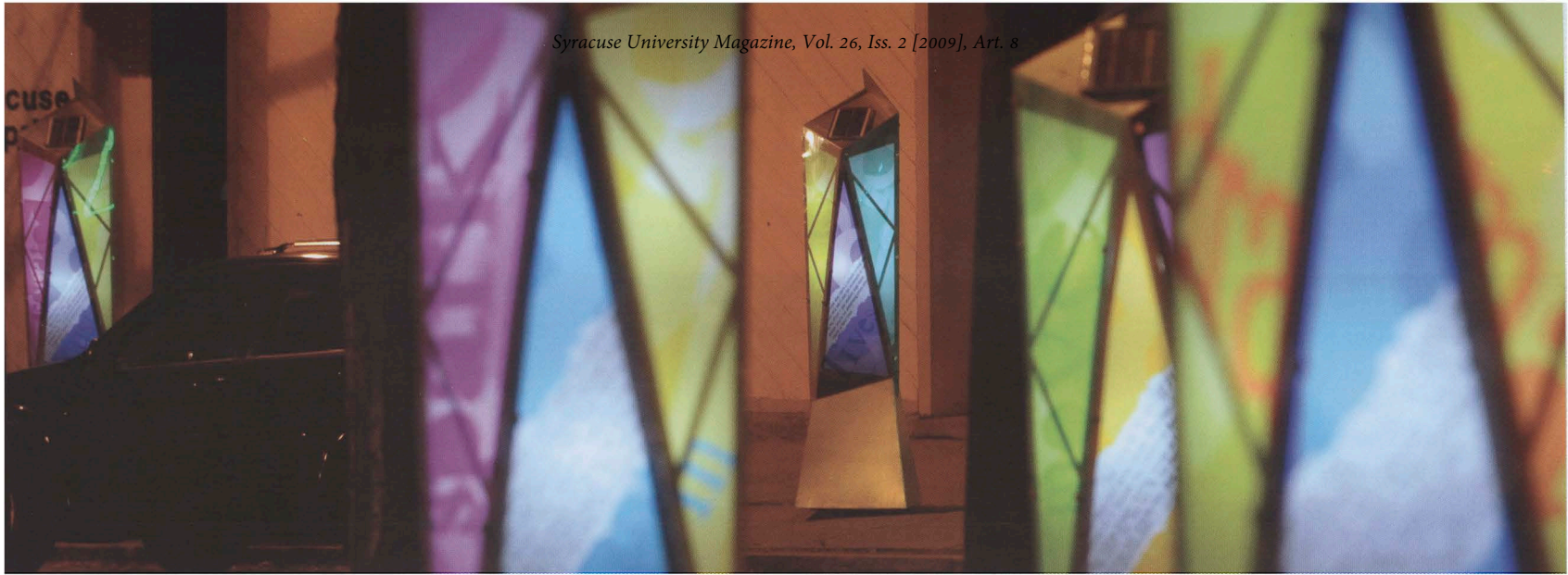
all available sources of capital, public and private; and working with lenders in the community to help entrepreneurs access business capital. A Whitman School course, Inclusive Entrepreneurship Consultants, taught by Shaheen and Mirza Tihic '03, G'04, G'06, prepares students to work on teams that assist Start-Up New York clients.

Shaheen and his colleagues keep the program dynamic by pursuing innovative sources of business and personal capital. Collaboration with the Syracuse Cooperative Federal Credit Union has resulted in 16 new entrepreneurs receiving matching grants. Monthly networking lunches held at the South Side Innovation Center encourage Start-Up entrepreneurs to build relationships and exchange information, and often provide more than economic benefits. "Folks who spend a lot of time negotiating their way through disability services systems often spend a lot of time talking with each other about their disabilities," Shaheen says. "But at these lunches, they are businesspeople first, exchanging cards and discussing their businesses."

Start-Up New York is already close to meeting its original goal of training 150 people in entrepreneurship and seeing 30 businesses launched within three years. "We expect the methods we have developed to be fully embedded in mainstream career counseling organizations, such as CNY Works and the Small Business Development Center, so that they can be offered to anyone who walks in the door," Shaheen says. "Entrepreneurship is a way for people to take control of their lives, and we are determined to make it available to everyone."



Gary Shaheen, managing director of program development for SU's Burton Blatt Institute, helps guide people with disabilities into entrepreneurial careers through the Start-Up New York initiative and support from an Enitiative grant.



Creative Solutions

LAST NOVEMBER, THE SYRACUSE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WAS IN THE MARKET for ideas, concepts, and strategies to bring foot traffic to a downtown area that sits forlornly between the well-traveled restaurants and bars of Armory Square and the city's major cultural destinations, such as the Everson Museum, Civic Center, and OnCenter, venues drawing thousands of visitors. SU's Collaboration Laboratory (COLAB)—part urban design studio, part sustainability think tank—provided one-stop shopping. Helped by an Enitiative grant, dozens of student designers, artists, geographers, and *urbanistas* organized themselves into teams and, when the dust cleared, presented a half-dozen professional grade proposals for transforming the nameless district into "Jefferson Row," a pedestrian friendly stretch of small-box boutiques selling food for mind and body. The chamber will use a selection of the maps, artists' renderings, and atmospheric descriptions to promote the concept to developers.

"We provide a creative interdisciplinary environment where diverse talents and visions intersect to explore complex issues and engage the community with responsible solutions," says COLAB director Chris McCray, a design professor in the College of Visual and Performing Arts. "Our direct confrontations with specific challenges—we call them "charrettes"—stimulate new ways of looking at things and foster innovative leadership."

"Change Your View" was a COLAB charrette focusing on street lighting for a segment of the Connective Corridor on East Genesee Street that includes Syracuse Stage, Phoebe's Restaurant, and the Community Folk Art Center. It made the journey from aesthetic vision to drawing board to fact-on-the-ground in short order. A design competition drew the participation of alumni, faculty, and students representing 11 majors. The prize-winner is now part of the streetscape: five solar-powered prism light sculptures made of heavy-gauge steel and translucent polycarbonate panels, each offering information on Syracuse history. The design team consisted of SU alumni Greg Allen '08, Jessica Lewis '08, and Barbara Livar '08; SUNY ESF alumnus Paul Brogna '08; and three students, Mary Geiger '10, Yelena Prusakova '10, and Bruce Davison, a master's degree candidate in architecture.

According to McCray, who owned an interior design business in Richmond, Virginia, before coming to Syracuse, COLAB charrettes prepare students for the emerging work environment. "We're taking people out of their silos so they can experiment and find ways to collaborate with each other," he says. "As a society, we face huge problems. Solutions require people from different backgrounds, holding different skill sets, to work together."

These solar-powered prism light sculptures, developed through a COLAB charrette, are now part of the streetscape near Syracuse Stage.

COLAB is an interdisciplinary program led by the College of Visual and Performing Arts and located at the SU Warehouse in downtown Syracuse.

